

LETTERS

Visitors need places to park

Re: Potential sale of Philpott church threatened by ‘impasse’ with city, Sept. 18
Rules, rules and more rules. I know we need rules so that society can all live together and play nice. But the city’s surface parking rules are not making sense to me. On one hand they, the city, want people to come to enjoy our wonderful entertainment centre, but how do people come to the city if there is no place to park their car? Take the bus? For some, sure, but what about the people that live out of town? They are preventing some people from coming into the city by not providing ample parking. It’s a good thing there is an election around the corner because something needs to change at city hall.
Catherine Castellan, Hannon

Voter apathy is to blame

Re: Is it time for a coalition? Vote splitting is keeping Ford in power, Sept. 15
I beg to differ that vote splitting is what is keeping Doug Ford in power. When, in the last election, only 39 per cent of eligible voters voted, and Ford won a majority government with only 19 per cent of the eligible vote, I would argue that what is keeping Ford in power is voter apathy.
Susanne Tristani, Burlington

We should be thanking Trump

I didn’t think I would be saying this about the narcissistic prevaricator-in-chief south of the border, but I’m beginning to think he’s the best president — for Canada — that we have had in recent memory. Consider this: He has united this country like no one in the past 50 or more years; he has forced provincial politicians to seriously discuss how to reduce interprovincial trade barriers; he has forced Ontario’s neighbours to the east to push back the possibility of leaving until at least he is no longer running the side show to the south; he has reduced the flow of tourist dollars going south with more Canadians spending their money at home; he has forced governments and businesses to rethink their dependence on our “friends” to the south; he has caused us to elect a leader who has a presence on the world stage; and, he has reminded us that we live in one of the best countries on the planet. He has given Canada a moment! I never thought I would be thinking this, let alone writing about it. Two more years of Trump may be the best thing that could happen to Canada.
Richard Ronchka, Carlisle

Carney’s contradictions

Re: Is PM’s strategy making sense? Sept. 17
Like most Canadians observing U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Mark Carney, I am thankful that Canada has a sane, intelligent leader at its helm. I felt reassured by his words at Davos: “Intermediate powers like Canada are not powerless. They have the capacity to build a new order that encompasses our values, like respect for human rights, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the various states.” Lloyd Axworthy’s column captures the contradictions of Carney’s actions: not attending Parliament or the UN General Assembly; not defending the judges of the International Criminal Court; abandoning peacekeeping operations and climate change priorities, etc. As Carney stated in Davos: “The power of the less powerful starts with honesty.” Canadians would like an honest answer from the PM. If the prime minister is “building what we claim to believe in,” who does he believe we are as Canadians?
Dawn Michael, Toronto

Don’t forget Highway 407

As much as I like Prime Minister Mark Carney’s approach in welcoming foreign investment, losing control of our airports really scares me. Just look at what happened to the privatization of Highway 407. That was a huge mistake and one I personally can’t forgive.
Norbert Hibbeln, Oshawa

Chedoke survey got it wrong

The Chedoke golf lands survey is poorly designed and does not adequately capture the views and experiences of the people who currently use the golf course regularly. If the city genuinely wants input from all members of the community, the questions should reflect all the ways the property is currently being used, including the golfers who play there. The survey appears to place considerable emphasis on activities such as walking, cycling, walking dogs and using the stairs. Those are certainly legitimate uses of the property, but golfers are also a significant part of the Chedoke community and should have a meaningful opportunity to provide input about the facility they currently use. There are many constructive ideas being discussed by golfers and other members of the community about how the existing golf operation could potentially be improved and made more financially viable. I hope the city will take the next step and ensure the public consultation process is equally comprehensive and gives every user group a fair opportunity to be heard.
John Malcolmson, Hamilton

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Thomas Froese’s son Jonathan high jumps at his school in East Africa in 2015. Commenting on how our first schools influence our lives, Froese writes “You’re a lucky soul if you learn to jump over at least something in life and have a good time doing it.”

THOMAS FROESE

Some of our best lessons won’t be found in a textbook



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

In our soaking socks, just two of us were left high jumping. That’s what I remember about that track and field day at Maple Crest School. Pouring rain and drenched socks. We’d taken our shoes off to be lighter.

Paul won, almost an afterthought to the memory. “Hey, remember high jumping in the pouring rain?” For years we talked about it. And everything else.

“Remember when Mr. Chamberlain took just me and you to McDonald’s?”

“Remember when he broke his yard stick on the desk of Jackie Bowes?”

“Remember Mrs. Walker telling Terry Pelowski, ‘Don’t open your mouth again,’ and he walked past her with his mouth wide open, so she chased him across the soccer field?”

“Remember when Shawn McGilly scored our first goal ever in soccer?”

“Remember Enzo Coplin beating the *&%# out of Robin Michaud, and Robin always wanting more?”

“Remember Mrs. Clark?” Do I remember Mrs. Clark? I was in love with Mrs. Clark. “Remember when she sent me and Pittawanaka to the office because we couldn’t stop laughing in her class? We got the strap!”

Maple Crest, a small Niagara public school with a fine Canadian name, was democratic. So you could choose the thick, red strap or the thin, black strap, which actually stung more on the palm.

“Yeah, then you and me got the strap for our big fist fight on the school’s front lawn. And we laughed!”

Paul lived across from Maple Crest in a plain house with his parents and five siblings. I was there all the time, especially for Mrs. Blakey’s cookies and street hockey with Paul, always Leafs and Canadiens.

One winter, for the entire neighbourhood, Mr. Chamberlain flooded the school’s field and put up boards. We couldn’t believe it. Our own ice. Huge. Then the next year. And again.

Maple Crest was eventually closed and demolished, giving way to Maple Crest Park. First, a school reunion. There someone photographed Paul and myself, now men, in front of the school holding the trophies we’d been awarded as kids.

“Oh my God, it’s Tommy Froese!” said Mrs. Walker when I walked into an old classroom. “You loved reading. You were years ahead. And you always liked putting things in their place.”

Are you kidding? Remembering your students for two decades?

Which is to say that this isn’t really about Maple Crest or Paul and myself. It’s about how even a small school with a big heart can have an outsized influence on your life.

I just read about a young boy, the writer William P. Young, trekking

into the bush with his reluctant father who left him behind. No surprise, William cried and cried. “I remember it like yesterday, the white dot of his shirt disappearing and reappearing, getting smaller each time. I have no memory of ever finding him.”

This is how a kid’s brain works. It’s like wet cement. Put your hands on it and the imprint stays.

It’s something good to think about during back-to-school-month, kids back in class with their lunch and fears and hopes and whatever else they’re carrying. Consider growing challenges in public schools. Whoever you are — teacher, parent, friend — don’t underestimate your influence.

One day my own boy was high jumping at his elementary school on the other side of the world. I took a photo. It’s telling. No matter where or when you jump, you’re a lucky soul if you learn to jump over at least something in life and have a good time doing it.

This isn’t about performance. It’s about being in a place — a school is one good example — where you’re loved for who you are, not for what you do, a place where someone will tell you that the party, indeed the circus of life, isn’t complete without you.

The good news is that if you don’t find this in one place, you’ll find it in another. That little boy, William? That’s what he discovered. If it wasn’t so, we’d all be lost.

FIND THOMAS FROESE AT THOMAS-FROESE.COM AND THOMASFROESE-SUBSTACK.COM.

Are men afraid to share the field?

ELIZABETH RENZETTI

It’s a tough time to be a woman in sports, or just a woman who loves sports.

If you’re a WNBA player, you’re dodging sex toys thrown from the stands. If you’re an athlete, you’re seeing a viral ad suggesting your only important stats are your bodily measurements. Maybe you’re a fan and your favourite team made a questionable hiring decision. Perhaps you’re a sports reporter trying to work with male athletes who find it hilarious when AI-generated images show you being smacked around.

Are men so afraid to share the playing field, the pitch, the ice, the lucrative sponsorship deals? Because it really seems like they want to take their balls and go home.

Let’s start with college quarterback Arch Manning, a member of a famous U.S. football dynasty but perhaps not a member of Mensa. Manning was asked about an AI-generated video that showed his coach, Steve Sarkisian, slapping ESPN reporter Holly Rowe. Manning thought the video was “hilarious.”

Manning apologized shortly after, possibly because the keepers of his brand panicked at the prospect of vanishing sponsorship dollars. Do we really think his attitude changed overnight? Or are his teammates still giggling in the locker-room and

grumbling about how they’re not allowed to have fun anymore? Only a few weeks ago a major golf brand thought it was equally hilarious to release an ad showing a female golfer being shoved to the ground.

The people who traditionally dominated the multibillion-dollar sports world sure seem terrified of even the small advances women have made in the professional arena.

The latest effort to diminish women’s accomplishments appeared in a viral ad for a sports betting company, featuring a nearly naked Sydney Sweeney posing in a hockey net, straddling a basketball hoop, balancing a soccer ball and wearing bits of sporting equipment that would have blushed if they could.

Female athletes also saw that ad and responded with a bracing mix of humour, rage and some much-needed schooling.

“This is what a woman in sports looks like” they said in videos showing them cycling, tackling, skating, lifting, rowing. Sweaty and corded with muscle. Focused on the finish line or the net, not on the male gaze.

Olympic skater Madeline Schizas responded with her own video, and later amplified her larger concerns in an interview the CBC: Why do so many girls drop out of sports at an early age? Why are so few Olympic coaches female? Where are the women in sports management and leadership?

The issue is bigger than one dumb ad or ignorant remark. It’s about whether the arena, and the rewards, will be shared with female athletes and fans.

Not on the margins, but in the spotlight.

There’s been huge growth in women’s professional sports, thanks to the groundbreaking work of earlier generations of athletes, but their play is still treated as inferior, resulting in less media attention, fewer sponsorship deals and smaller paycheques.

It’s heartening to see women raising their voices, united in their love of sports and demanding their place in it.

An Edmonton Oilers superfan, Mary Loewen, recently launched a petition to protest the team signing Alex Formenton to a one-year contract. Formenton was one of five hockey players charged with sexual assault — and acquitted of the charge — in a case that rocked Canada in 2025.

Loewen’s petition calling on the Oilers to reverse their hiring decision has gathered more than 65,000 signatures. She writes: “As a sexual assault survivor and longtime Oilers supporter known as Mama Stanley, I cannot support or cheer for this team while Formenton remains an Oiler. Since sharing that decision, I have heard from survivors and hockey fans across Edmonton, Canada and beyond who feel hurt, unheard and betrayed.”

These voices of protest tell us one thing: the playing field is nowhere near level. Prepare for the jeers to continue until it is.

ELIZABETH RENZETTI IS THE AUTHOR OF “WHAT SHE SAID: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT EQUALITY.”